

CANADIAN RAILWAY - AUG 8, 1862

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Abraham Lincoln's Political Career through 1860

Campaign Rally August 8, 1860

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

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FOR THE PEOPLE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN ASSOCIATION

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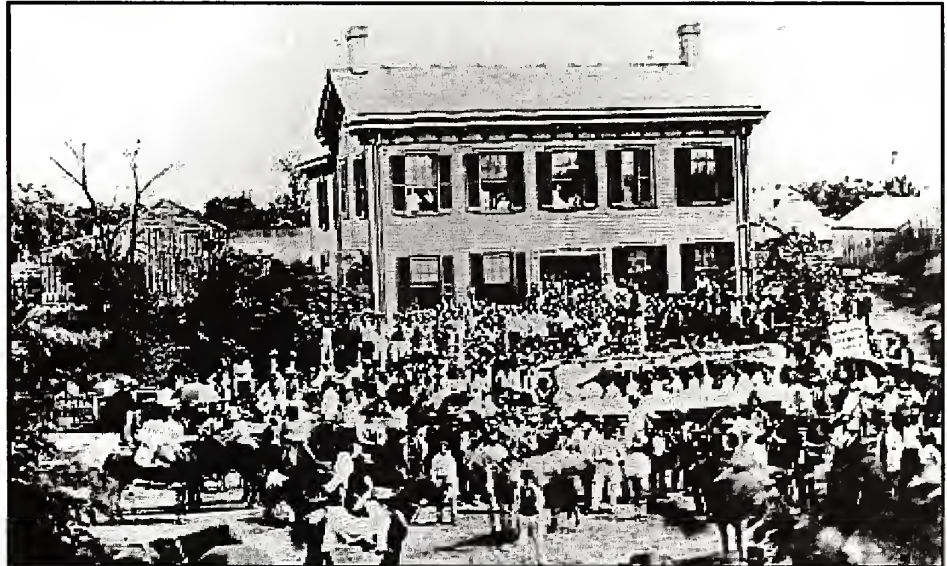
SPRINGFIELD CAMPAIGN RALLY OF AUGUST 8, 1860: TWO RECOLLECTIONS

Thomas F. Schwartz, Secretary
The Abraham Lincoln Association

One of the most recognized images of the pre-presidential Lincoln shows him in a white summer suit, standing in the doorway of his Springfield residence while a parade of supporters march past. A float with thirty-three young ladies dressed in white, representing the states of the Union, is in the foreground with a small buggy attached with another young lady in white carrying a sign "Won't you let me in—Kansas," a reference to the troubled territory. It was a day full of festivities. The following two recollections come from different observers, but both were friends.

George Brinkerhoff came to Springfield in 1859 to teach at Illinois State University, a private subscription school that Robert Todd Lincoln attended. Brinkerhoff later helped organize the Springfield City Railway and the Springfield Iron Company. He also served in several governmental functions as Springfield's City Comptroller and as the Illinois State Auditor.

His friend, Charles Wesley Keeley, worked for the railroad and also served in the Seventy Third Illinois Volunteer Infantry, recording his military experience in a diary he later privately published. Keeley's recollections were first written in 1922 and sent to Brinkerhoff who penned the



Lincoln pictured in his white summer suit on the steps of his home while a parade of supporters march past during the August 8, 1860, campaign rally.

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

following note dated February 25, 1922: "Yours of recent date is before me and noted. I have received your paper and have read your interesting account. It is substantially correct." The typescript that this transcription is derived from is dated March 1, 1928. Brinkerhoff died on September 9, 1928 at the age of 89. Whether prompted by Keeley's 1922 recollection or written independently at an earlier date, Brinkerhoff's son John provided The Abraham Lincoln Association access to a manuscript describing the same event. The transcription reproduced here is based on a typescript created on October 20, 1948.

GEORGE BRINKERHOFF ACCOUNT

I came to Illinois in 1859 and soon thereafter became acquainted with Mr. Lincoln. Sometime in the late Fall I remember being invited to and attended a party of their friends—old and young people—at their home, and I well remember Mr. Lincoln entertaining a few of the guests with some of his funny stories. Afterwards we had another party at Mrs. Lincoln's sister's home, Mrs. Wallace, and there I was one of a party to be entertained by Mr. Lincoln. He certainly was a good story teller.

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The week in 1860 the Republican National Convention was in session in Chicago and Mr. Lincoln remained at home here in Springfield. I saw him and talked to him quite a short time the day he was nominated. We had stirring times here after that date and on the 8th of August, 1860, the Lincoln Campaign was opened with one of the largest political gatherings in the United States up to and since that time that has very seldom been equaled. People came one and two hundred miles in carriages, wagons and on railroad trains (we had not many railroads in those days) to see and hear—especially to see Mr. Lincoln, the Railsplitter Candidate of the Republican Party for President of the United States.

We had many meetings during the Campaign but none to equal this one. It was estimated by competent judges that there were not less than 75,000 people here. The procession was some five or more miles long and in the procession were wagons with people splitting rails, building rail fences, hunting coons with hounds and printing presses printing the news of the meeting and scattering these sheets along the streets. We had many marshals at this meeting and I delivered him at the afternoon meeting at the old County Fair Grounds located near by the New High School grounds.

This I did and I took Robert Office as my companion, and went to Mr. Lincoln's residence where we found him awaiting the carriage provided for him and our arrival as his escort. We took him to the meeting and onto the speaker's platform where he made a short speech, and the only one, as has been stated, he made during the campaign. After the meeting was over we got Mr. Lincoln to his carriage where the crowd's and insistent demands of the people



George M. Brinkerhoff photograph by Victor George.

Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, Springfield, Illinois.

culminated in the breaking down of our carriage. After this it was necessary to return Mr. Lincoln to his home on horseback and in the melee he lost his hat. In the meantime a "Wide Awake" belonging to a Chicago Company found it and arriving at Mr. Lincoln's residence just as we did, returned the hat to its owner. Mr. Lincoln was very much pleased at this attention and told this enthusiastic "Wide Awake" that if he would bring his entire company to his residence (as it now stands at the corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets) he, Mr. Lincoln, would shake hands with all the members of the company. At 6:30 that evening the entire company visited Mr. Lincoln who did meet and shake hands with them all.

I was with Mr. Lincoln many times during the campaign and we felt sure he would be elected and were not disappointed. I was with a large crowd with Mr. Lincoln in the old State House (now the Sangamon County Court House) the night of the election. We were a boisterous crowd but entirely sober. This room is still in use and we have had Lincoln Day celebrations in it and it is the same room in which Mr. Lincoln made his celebrated "A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand."

CHARLES W. KEELEY ACCOUNT

"THE GREAT LINCOLN HOME COMING RALLY AT SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, AUGUST 8, 1860"

During the forenoon, Mr. Lincoln gave two receptions: I was present at both; the first at the old State House; the second at his home, where Mr. & Mrs. Lincoln received the public on the portico, after they had passed through the years, and through the house. The great procession was then passing.

Perhaps the most imposing display came from Williamsville, Sangamon County. Several platform wagons were lashed together, on which was a Lincoln Log Cabin, Lincoln Rails, a Smithy shoeing a horse, men hewing and splitting, and women spinning and knitting. The outfit was drawn by sixteen yoke of oxen. Mr. Lincoln's time was well occupied with shaking hands, and bowing to the marchers, but he found time to laugh when the ox team display spread out before him. Col. John Williams was Grand Marshal and conducted the procession to the old fair grounds, where five or more speaker's stands had been erected. When I arrived, John M. Palmer was speaking from the stand near the entrance. A covered carriage halted directly in front of the stand, which contained Mr. Lincoln and three others, escorted by two mounted men, George Brinkerhoff, assistant Marshal, charged with the care of Mr. Lincoln's person, and Robert Officer. Mr. Lincoln was not permitted to remain a spectator. He was taken out of the carriage, carried and placed on the stand. So many Wide Awakes took position on the stand that it was broken down. Fortunately no one was injured. When the stand was righted Mr. Lincoln stood up and said: "Well, I am right end up!"

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Then followed the few and only words spoken by Lincoln in the campaign of 1860. "My fellow citizens, I appear before you on this occasion with no intention of making a speech. It has been my purpose since I have been placed in my present position, to make no speeches. This assemblage having been called together at the place of my residence, it appeared to be the wish of those constituting this assembly to see me: and it is certainly my wish to see you. I appear on the ground here at this time only for the purpose of affording myself the best opportunity of seeing you and enabling you to see me. I confess with gratitude, be it understood, that I did not suppose my appearing among you would create the tumult which I now witness. I am profoundly grateful for this manifestation of your feelings. I am gratified because it is a tribute which can be paid to no man as a man: it is the evidence that four years from this time you will give a like manifestation to the next man who is the

representative of the truth on the question that now agitates the public, and is because you will then fight for this cause as you do now, or with greater ardor than now, though I be dead and gone, that I most profoundly thank you. Having said this much, allow me now to say that it is my wish that you will hear the public discussion by others of our friends who are here for the purpose of addressing you, and that you will kindly allow me to be silent."

Mr. Lincoln was then returned to the carriage in the same manner in which he was taken out and the carriage moved to the rear among the small trees surrounded by a boisterous cheering crowd which gained in force as it proceeded. Seeing that it was headed for the exit, I took a position at a point where I thought it would pass, and anchored myself to a sapling. When the carriage arrived directly opposite me, less than four feet away, it could proceed no farther. Fortunately the Marshall procured a third saddle horse which he brought up on the left side of the

carriage between my anchor and the carriage headed the same way. Mr. Lincoln stepped out and owing to the want of space was compelled to mount the horse on the wrong side, which he did with some effort. I was enabled to take a memory sketch of Mr. Lincoln as he was sitting in the saddle, bare-headed and looking down at the horse. The escort forced a passage for his escape and then Mr. Lincoln's horse was led up between the other two and they passed out from the grounds at a lively gait.

Mr. Brinkerhoff, writing me of the event later, said: "Mr. Lincoln was moderately excited but calm holding on to the saddle as we led the horse. People followed well up the street. One man, of greater endurance than the others, kept pace with the riders and reaching the Lincoln Home about the same time, went in and asked to shake hands with Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln's hat was brought him at his home. The determination of the people that day to see and hear Mr. Lincoln was something fearful."

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